

A VOICE FROM THE MILLIONS!

REASONS FOR APPEALING

TO THE

MIDDLE CLASSE

ON BEHALF OF THEIR

UNENFRANCHISED BRETHREN.

BY A NORWICH OPERATIVE.

“Withhold not good from them to whom it is *due*, when it is in the power of *thine hand* to do it.”—Prov. iii. 27.

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TO THE MIDDLE CLASSES OF GREAT BRITAIN.

“GOVERNMENT,” said an eminent writer, “owes its birth to the necessity of preventing and repulsing the injuries which the associated individuals had to fear from one another.” A fact which few will feel inclined to question, whilst many will admit that the offspring of the necessity adverted to, has been, in many instances, the parent and the perpetrator of innumerable injuries, scarcely less detrimental to individual and social happiness, than those, the fear of which led to its origin.

But such injuries are neither inherent to the existence, nor a necessary consequence of this developed effect of social requirement. Although the institution of civil government, in itself, offers a strong temptation to the perpetration of the very vices, in its collective capacity, which its office is to detect, punish, and prevent; yet, in most instances where those vices have been apparent, they have been the result of a monopoly of governmental power, either by actual usurpation, or the exercise, on the part of a *few* only, of the right of choosing the individuals upon whom this immense responsibility is conferred.

The history of our own country would abundantly furnish us with the means of establishing this assertion; but we need only point to the injustice now perpetrated upon more than five-sixths of its adult population, and, to the consequent effects, as sufficient proofs that class-formed governments have not legitimately exercised the power with which they have been entrusted, but have rather made those whom they have placed without the pale of political privilege, the victims of additional oppression and injustice; debarring them from the exercise of a self-evident right, and yet fixing upon them

the maximum proportion of the expense—in some cases totally unnecessary—of discharging those functions they have claimed to exercise.

From this degrading position, we—the working-classes of this country—now seek to be emancipated; and to that effect, appeal for aid to you, our middle-class brethren. We do not conceive any apology to be due from us for taking this step. The endurance of wrong is a sufficient justification for seeking the means of its removal; and, believing that we are enduring a wrong which *you* have the power to remove, we feel that our appeal is neither premature nor unnecessary.

Under this conviction, we proceed to render our reasons for soliciting your co-operation in the great work of ENFRANCHISING THE PEOPLE.

1. Our appeal would be utterly useless, if we were incapable of fully substantiating our first reason.—*Because you CAN help us.*

There are abundant proofs that your power is felt and dreaded by the supporters of aristocratical usurpation. The great victory of commercial reform is mainly attributable to your influence, and if you were determined that we *should* be enfranchised, the struggle for political reform would be equally successful; but that unhappy adherence to one or other of the particular parties in the state (which, unfortunately, we have too often imitated) has caused you to lose sight of the close connection of our enfranchisement with your *own* interests, and to become the stepping-stones to wealth and power, of the men who have disregarded those interests, as soon as their ambitious designs have been accomplished.

We cannot better prove your possession of the power to emancipate us, than by calling your attention to the following important article from a metropolitan newspaper.

“We have before us a list of 150 cities and boroughs, selected from the whole number, as being in some measure open to popular influence. Their representatives exceed 250. We find, upon consulting the returns presented to the House of Commons, that these 150 boroughs contain a total constituency of 300,000 electors. Our list comprises 13 places sending 28 members as the representatives of 140,000 electors; and 137 places, sending 222 members as the representatives of not more than 160,000 electors. The former consist of the city of London and the

metropolitan boroughs, and the towns of Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham and Leeds. We think that the decision of these constituencies upon any great question which is to be carried solely by the pressure of a popular movement, can hardly be doubted. Under an effective system of organization most of those seats may be secured for the people; and the only practical question remaining to be considered is, whether it is possible to arouse the other 137 places, with only 160,000 electors divided amongst them all, to an assertion of their own freedom, and that of their fellow-countrymen. A trifle above 80,000 votes would give us a majority; the question would then be left to be decided by the votes of Ireland and Scotland, and in their hands it might be safely left, without the smallest fear of the result. Upon the will of no larger a number than 80,000 electors is suspended the future destiny of Britain."

It has often been asserted that the Reform Bill is a failure; regarded as a measure based upon the principles of universal justice, it will not bear the sifting, but the above quotation shows that it may be made the means of securing the entire liberties of the people. The power it conferred upon you has not yet been fairly exercised. We implore you to exert that power on behalf of the powerless, and prove the truth of our assertion—that you *can* secure your wronged brethren their political rights.

We readily admit that the adoption of a course so contrary to the general tenor of political tactics would place you in opposition to many for whose exertions in partial reformation you entertain the highest regard, but the really honest among them would not be long in respecting your motives, and in co-operating with you. We also admit that an unconstitutional power is influencing the House of Commons, against which the utmost perseverance and the most determined vigilance need be exercised; but we have shown that it is not more than your united efforts may overcome.

II. *Because in demanding the franchise you adopted the SAME ARGUMENTS we now employ.*

In the memorable struggle to procure the passing of the Reform Bill, one great argument of its supporters was *the inequality of the representation*. Glaring instances were pointed out to establish that argument; and although Gatton or Old Sarum no longer exercises an influence in the legislature equal to the city of York, yet, it is easy to prove that equality of representation is far from having been attained. We find

that the Tower Hamlets, with a constituency amounting to nearly 20,000, is equalled in the representation by Thetford with a constituency of 214! Several instances of this kind might be pointed out; but let the following startling fact suffice.—The united constituencies of Finsbury and Liverpool, amounting to upwards of 33,000, return 4 members to parliament; whilst 66 boroughs, the united constituencies of which do not exceed 30,000, return 105 members! Surely, the demand for equal representation, which was so powerfully urged by the reformers of 1832, may be reiterated by the reformers of 1849.

The *inequality and severe pressure of taxation* was an argument often enforced, when, as the means of securing its reduction and equalization, you claimed the franchise. The unjust system of indirect taxation renders the argument far more available to us than it ever could be to yourselves; as the only means of abolishing that system we seek to remove the political disability of those who are the principal victims of its injustice.

The *pension list* was pointed out as affording a powerful reason for reforming the parliament. That reason still exists. Starving artisans and half-ruined tradesmen continue to furnish the means of supporting a host of idle drones, whose aristocratical connections will ensure the perpetuation of the abuse, until the monopoly of legislation be abolished.

The *existence and continual increase of an enormous standing army* was complained of at the time of the Reform Bill agitation; and confidently was it hoped that the passing of that bill would ensure its immediate reduction. We echo that complaint with greater reason than you had for urging it; the standing army has been increased by upwards of 30,000 men, since the year previous to your political enfranchisement.

The *existence of bribery and corruption* was also adduced as an argument in favour of the Reform Bill. That measure, far from having suppressed these disgusting practices, has furnished innumerable proofs that so partial a recognition of popular representation is inadequate to produce a pure con-

stituency. Voting by ballot and a large extension of the franchise only can secure that desideratum.

In supporting the Reform Bill it was also argued that *intimidation existed to an extent which required the enlargement of the constituency to prevent it*. Experience has taught us that the enlargement effected by the Reform Bill is an insufficient remedy. Our means of suppressing bribery and corruption will prevent its possibility. The practice of open voting will ever facilitate the commission of the crime, alike on those whose poverty peculiarly exposes them to such oppression, and those in more opulent circumstances, who in innumerable ways are subject to its tyrannical influence.

The power of the aristocracy in the House of Commons was urged as a reason for passing the Reform Bill. None can consistently deny us the full force of this argument. The very limited constituency in many small boroughs, renders them the property of certain aristocratical families, whose nominees are as secure in their possession of seats in the House of Commons, as any boroughmonger in the palmy days of Pitt and Castlereagh. Every measure presented to that house is tested by its probable influences on aristocratic privileges.

But the Reform Bill was further demanded as a RIGHT. "The king; his rights, and no more!"—"The people; their rights, and no less!" were mottos horribly annoying to the aristocracy at that time; we scarcely need say, the latter is as yet unrealized. "Representation should be co-equal with taxation" was then emblazoned on thousands of banners. The opinions of Blackstone and others were in constant citation. What meant the reiteration of important incontrovertible truths at that time? We cannot conceive that they were urged unbelieved;—mere pretexts to frighten your opponents; but are persuaded that they were adduced to show the extent of the opinions of those who were then seeking to embody, in a tangible shape, a partial recognition of them. We fearlessly assert that your advocacy of the Reform Bill on the correct grounds to which we have ad-

verted, has placed you in a position which renders your co-operation with us a matter of consistency.

III. *Because having experienced our degradation, and having had your claim to the franchise ridiculed, you can sympathize with us.*

Your position in 1832, is ours in 1849. You then felt that political outlawry was no trivial matter. Enumbered with an overwhelming amount of taxation you sought to mitigate it. Year after year had you made known your wants to your *professed* representatives, and as often had they treated you with contempt. Tired of fruitless attempts to procure an alleviation of your burdens, and confident that you could never procure justice through the medium of a system which was a caricature on common sense, you nobly resolved that that system should give place to one in which your power should be recognized.

The same treatment, even at the hand of a *reformed* House of Commons, has been experienced by us; and, as a natural consequence, the same determination has been the result. The taunts and jeers with which our arguments have been met, are the echo of those heaped upon you, when you demanded your political enfranchisement. If we are termed the "turbulent lower orders," your favourite measure was opposed, as "approaching to the despotism of a mob."* If we are denounced as the "worthless rabble," it was insinuated that "you were not that class of persons to whom attention ought to be given; that your intellectual acquirements and moral character did not entitle your opinions to consideration."† Paltry jests are passed respecting the persons whom *we* might elect; and it was impudently asked in the House of Lords, if individuals elected by voters paying 3s. 10d. per week, would be fit representatives.‡ We have been denounced as desirous of the destruction of property; and it was declared, that the Reform Bill "took the franchise out of the hands of those that were able to protect property, and gave it to the breakers of frames and machinery."|| Denying us the franchise, on the plea that it will invest those with power who have no property in the state, is as absurd as was

* Mr. Bankes. † Marquis of Bute. ‡ Earl of Harrowby. || Earl Carnarvon.

the opposition offered to the Reform Bill, by one of the aristocracy,* because "it conferred the right of voting upon householders in St. Giles, who, though inhabiting houses of £40 a year, were receiving parish relief." *Universal* suffrage meets an abundant share of opprobrium; and it was stated that "renters of 3s. 10d. per week, was the *very worst* species of representation that could be devised."† Our "immorality" has had its share of comment; and the bench of bishops, as the "guardians of *good order and religion*," were entreated to prevent the passing of the Reform Bill.‡ Our "dishonesty" has been tauntingly vaunted; and it was said in the House of Commons, that "£10 householders were not the proper persons to return members to Parliament; great numbers of whom paid their rent weekly, *because their landlords would only trust them from week to week*."§ Predictions of the most disastrous character, respecting the consequences of our attaining our demands, are plentiful; and it was asserted that if you secured your object, "no administration would be able to carry on the Government for six months."§ We are termed, "reckless innovators;" and it was said of your bill, that it would bring into Parliament "the talents of demagogues, the talent of mischief, and that talent which would pull down, and crumble to dust, all the institutions of the country."¶ We are indignant at the insinuation, that an assembly, composed of the representatives of the whole people, would be inferior in character to those elected by a portion of them; and you were indignant, when, in opposing your claims, it was unblushingly avowed of the Parliament prior to the passing of the Reform Bill, that it was "the noblest assembly of freemen in the world;" that there was "no hope of seeing an assembly equal to it, for talent, integrity, and patriotism."** Our demands are termed "revolutionary;" yours were opposed, because granting them would be followed by "confusion—civil war; and some powerful chief, when men's minds were satiated

* Lord Wynford. † Lord Lyndhurst. ‡ Lord Wynford. § Sir C. Wetherell.

§ Sir J. Shelly. ¶ Lord Wynford. ** Lord Wharncliffe.

with trouble, would interfere, and establish a military despotism.”* We have been accused of holding strange ideas respecting the “national debt;” and at the time of the reform agitation, it was said, that “neither freeholders nor fundholders must flatter themselves that their property would be safe. No new government had much regard for the debts of an old one.”† We have been termed “anti-monarchists;” and it was said, that “a reformed Parliament would take the crown off the king’s head.”‡ The late premier§ declared, that “a reformed Parliament would give the government of the country into the hands of demagogues; it would reduce this happy land to a state of despotism and destruction;” and “although the monarchy would not be nominally abolished, still it would be virtually, by the democrats who would reign in the House of Commons.” We would observe, that whatever the perplexities of the Rt. Hon. Baronet may have been, he has never been tormented by a *majority* of democrats.

With such quotations we might fill a volume. Do not imagine that we urge them on your notice by way of taunt or ridicule. No! we do so, that it may be seen that the same fears were entertained respecting your attaining the franchise, as are now deemed sufficient reasons for withholding it from us; that the scorn—the degrading epithets—the villainous falsehoods—which have been heaped upon us, are the same in substance, which aristocratic impudence then so liberally dealt out in opposition to you. We know they silenced you not; but excited within you a stronger determination to acquire the power which might enable you successfully to contend against your malevolent slanderers. They have produced the same effect upon ourselves; and we are confident that a review of your past feelings will lead you to the conclusion that you are bound to aid us. We will never eringe to our oppressors, whilst we can appeal for help to those, who once experienced our degradation, and who gloriously achieved a victory, we are determined to obtain.

* Mr. Price. † Sir R. Vyvyan. ‡ Sir R. Vyvyan. § Sir R. Peel.

IV. *Because you are indebted to OUR EXERTIONS for your possession of the elective franchise.*

You will not deny that your attainment of the rights of citizenship was not solely the result of your own efforts—that the “pressure from without” which forced the Reform Bill through the House of Lords, did not accumulate its strength from yourselves alone. You were assisted by us, who, so far as the possession of political liberty was concerned, had neither part nor lot in the matter. You assured us that your attaining the franchise would prove beneficial to us; we believed you, and rested not till your object was effected. We now appeal to you, as holding a right, obtained through our instrumentality; the value of that right you appreciate, and the certainty that you prize it, adds cogency to our arguments. If an effort were made to deprive you of that right—in plain terms, if the repeal of the Reform Bill were attempted, to whom would you look for aid? Surely, to the very men, who now seek the attainment of the rights they assisted you to secure; to those, who are now striving to render impossible the backward march to despotism. Rest assured, that our success in battling for your liberty has rendered more ardent the thirst for our own.

V. *Because our political emancipation would prove conducive to YOUR ADVANTAGE.*

Our interests are identical. In contending for political liberty, we seek the means of reducing taxation, and of destroying every barrier to the attainment of national prosperity. It must be evident, that you would reap a two-fold advantage in the reduction of taxation—a diminution of your expenses, and the reception of a large proportion of that part of our limited income, which now finds its way into the revenue, to provide for those who are comparatively free from taxation. As individuals particularly interested in the prosperity of all classes in the state, you could not better promote your interests, than by investing with their rights, those, who, as the effect of their being withheld, are undergoing privations necessarily reflected on yourselves. An act of justice brings its own reward. The very fact of your

assisting to vindicate the claims of your injured fellow-countrymen, would create a bond of union which tyranny or treachery might vainly attempt to sever. The base gratification which our common enemies have felt in witnessing our dissensions, would cease, when they beheld those, whom they have too long succeeded in dividing, united in the determination to destroy the power which enslaves them. The victory would speedily be gained, and the recollection of past discord would not be permitted to harass an unity of purpose, in securing a full and fair possession of those blessings, which Providence has designed for all, but which oppression has prostituted to the advantage of a few.

VI. *Because many of you have rendered great assistance in*
 EDUCATING US.

There was much sagacity evinced by those, who opposed the education of what they termed the "lower orders," on the ground that it would render them discontented. Their exertions to prevent that dreaded catastrophe were futile; for although there is yet great necessity for the advocates of popular education to be zealous in their work, yet enough has been done to realize the awful prophecy. By teaching us to appreciate the great maxim—"knowledge is power"—you have led us to become acquainted with our country's history, and with the lives of those who have exercised an influence on its destinies; and, finding that many of the wars and strifes abroad, and much of the misery and starvation at home, have been occasioned by a vicious system of legislation, it is only natural that we should seek to destroy the prolific source of such complicated wretchedness. If education has taught us that our limited resources render necessary the exercise of the strictest economy, it is not strange that we should demur to the absorption of so large a portion of those resources for governmental expenses. We have been made sufficiently conversant with the connection between cause and effect, to perceive that our interests cannot be secure, until we have a share in enacting the laws we are compelled to obey. It should be remembered, too, that true enlightenment of mind, independent of other causes, produces a hatred of any system which

requires a passive obedience to human dictates. By teaching us that our intellectual faculties are not to be absorbed in "whistling at the plough," or in "making obeisance to our betters," you have propounded sentiments, which have led us to acquire correct ideas of our worth and importance in society; and we ought not—*we will not* be satisfied with a condition bordering on serfdom.

If you imagine that these results of education are disastrous; if you believe that discontent will produce a worse, rather than a better state of things; if you think that we are in error, when we seek our political emancipation,—then cease to educate the masses; stop the school-master in his progress; proclaim the bliss of ignorance; and, if you have not advanced too far already, you may retard the recognition of the rights of man.

But we are far from believing that you would do this; conscious of the individual sacrifices which many of you have made to promote our well-being, through the medium of education, we are emboldened to hope that you will aid us in procuring that liberty, the desire of which, your own benevolence has, to a great extent, helped to enkindle.

VII. *Because many of you take a lively interest in propagating the great truths of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.*

The numerous voluntary institutions formed for the diffusion of religion, have helped to strengthen the desire for political justice; and it is gratifying to observe, that the means by which that justice is now sought to be obtained, are strictly in accordance with the principles and requirements of divine revelation. Tremble not at the effect of your own zeal! You must either cease from disseminating God's word, or prepare yourselves for a grand recognition of its hallowed dictates. Christianity struck the bonds from the negro, and the honour awaits it of destroying the oppression under which your fellow-countrymen are suffering. The time has passed, in which designing men could make the Bible the text-book of tyranny; your Bible Societies—your Home Missionary and Christian-Instruction Societies—and Sunday Schools—by presenting Christianity, *as it came from God*, have struck a blow at injustice, which priestism can never counteract.

We conceive that religion should regulate and control the affairs of nations, as well as of individuals and families; and that in proportion as human laws approximate to the standard of moral rectitude which the New Testament exhibits, will national happiness result. A transgression of a divine law, on the part of a collective body, is surely as offensive to Him who made it, as its commission by a solitary individual. He, who was an example of mercy and forbearance, denounced injustice in terms too plain to be misunderstood; and His injunction, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," is not thoroughly regarded, so long as our claims are unrecognized. What then becomes of the assertion, that politics are beyond the range of Christian duty? Let the question be seriously considered, and we fear not the decision to which the workings of conscience will prompt.

VIII. *Because we have ABANDONED all hopes of help from other sources.*

The originators of the Reform Bill, frightened at their own work, have refused to proceed further in the march of political improvement; and, as a palliative to the wound inflicted upon aristocratical dominion, have declared it to be a "final measure." Some of them are now the strenuous opponents of the rights of the people; while others, by their indifference, warn us to place no confidence in them. In both Houses of Parliament our claims have been treated with insult and derision.

To you, therefore, we are compelled to look. It remains to be seen, whether you will follow those examples, or whether a sense of justice will not prompt a different decision. Let us not have to add *your* determination to continue our debasement. What ray of hope would then enlighten our path! Despair would take the place of faith in honest argument for principle, and who shall venture to predict the consequences!

IX. *Because a FAVOURABLE OPPORTUNITY OF UNITING WITH US now presents itself.*

We have proved your possession of the power to invest us with political freedom, and have adduced our reasons for soliciting its exercise. We rejoice in being able to conclude them by

inviting you to join an organization, destined to become the most powerful engine of political improvement ever originated.

The "PARLIAMENTARY & FINANCIAL REFORM ASSOCIATION" has been formed for the purpose of securing the possession of the franchise to every male adult who "for 12 months shall have occupied any tenement, or part of a tenement, for which he shall be rated, or shall have claimed to be rated to the relief of the poor,"* and thus of obtaining such a House of Commons as shall fairly and dispassionately consider the claims of the community to a reduction and equalization of taxation. It is evident that in order to secure any important change, all classes of Reformers must be united, and the proposal of this wide extension of the suffrage seems to have accomplished this desirable object. Many who hesitate to invest the entire male adult population with the franchise, are rendering effectual aid to this movement, whilst those of us who claim the suffrage as a natural right, rejoice in the opportunity of securing such a tribunal in parliament as will give to that claim an impartial consideration. Happily the rallying point has thus been found for the friends of progress to commence their attack upon the tottering fortress of fiscal tyranny, and political wrong.

Such are our reasons for urging upon your attention one of the most important questions ever introduced in the annals of political history. We trust we have given them honestly and candidly, and in a manner not undeserving attention.

Well aware, however, that certain objections to our claims are considered sufficiently sound to warrant their rejection, we wish to conclude by briefly advertng to them, and attempting their refutation.

1. It is asserted that, as a body, *we are not sufficiently intelligent to be entrusted with the franchise.*

It must not be forgotten, that property—not intelligence—has been the standard of political privilege, consequently there is nothing antecedent to strengthen the objection.

* It is important to remember that it is not intended to make the payment of the rate the *voting qualification*, but that the appearance of an individual's name in the rate book should constitute *the proof of occupancy*, or partial occupancy of a tenement. The rating of the landlord will be regarded as a virtual rating of the occupier.

We are not, however, prepared to admit that the question of RIGHT to the franchise is at all effected by the ignorance or intelligence of a community. The difficulty of defining an intellectual qualification is a proof of the untangibleness of the objection. We contend that helping to defray the expenses of a state, involves the right to a share in the control of its proceedings; and should a certain class, through the influence of circumstances, be less enlightened than their more fortunate brethren, it is the duty of the latter, not to deprive that class of the right, but, to aim at placing them in the possession of those intellectual advantages which would qualify them for its correct exercise. We have here another instance of that ever-apparent providential arrangement which exhibits the mutual dependence of men upon each other, in making it the *interest* of the intelligent to aim at the mental improvement of the ignorant, and to strive at eradicating the seeds of error from the minds of the mis-informed. Freedom is the best pioneer of education; an enlightened community would tread speedily upon the heels of an enfranchised people.

We are not disposed to deny that a vast amount of ignorance exists amongst us. The amount of labour requisite to procure the necessaries of life, renders it impossible to devote other than a very limited portion of time to mental improvement. It therefore follows that the blame of our ignorance does not rest wholly upon ourselves. Nine millions per annum are received by those who profess to be our instructors, and yet, so grossly have they neglected their duties, that—if they are to settle the question—we are yet unfit to control our collective affairs!

It is worth observing, that we have heard nothing of this charge when our influence in relation to other subjects has been requested. We have been urged on to turn the scale in favour of each political party; and have been deemed sufficiently intelligent to understand the most weighty questions the legislature has taken into consideration, or we should never have been solicited to make our opinions known through the medium of petitions. In fact, our opponents cannot resist our claims on this ground, without convicting themselves of hypocrisy, or deserving the charge they urge against us.

We are not inclined to deny that the *effects* of ignorance have been apparent amongst us. It is true that we have been too eager to do the bidding of a proud and selfish aristocracy ; that some of us have accepted bribes to engage in the slaughter of men who had never injured us, under the delusive impression that we were fighting for our own homes and our country's glory ; that we have been too anxious to "doff the hat" to the licentious and worthless ; that many of us have revelled in the pot-house, brawling "Britons never will be slaves," whilst bowing the neck to oppression : and thus have given our opponents an advantage they have not failed to perceive :—but now, when we regard slavery as a degradation ; when starvation itself is not often sufficient to tempt an artizan to follow in the wake of the man-slayer ; when we deem it more honourable to respect worth than empty show and childish title ; when temperance is beginning to "exalt the man ;" when we have ascertained the cause of our degradation, and found it to be the tyranny of an aristocracy who now urge against us the charge of ignorance, as a reason for retaining us in bondage, we repel the accusation with scorn, and demand our rights.

2. We have heard it contended that the working classes, having sought to obtain their demands *by physical force*, have proved the danger of conceding them.

We think no individual is prepared to hazard the assertion, that we contemplate the attainment of our enfranchisement by force of arms. We can assure you, that the few who hold such an idea, form a minority as contemptible as their means. But without defending that conduct which, unfortunately, some of our brethren have exemplified, we are desirous of tracing the causes which led to transactions we deplore, both on account of their incompatability with the object sought, and the erroneous impressions they have created on your minds.

There is a very prevalent conviction that a standing army exercises an injurious influence upon a community. It must not be forgotten, that in this country, its ranks are filled from the working classes. The Duke of Wellington has complained of the antipathy of middle-class parents to their sons adopting the military profession, and of the necessity for the Government

to look to the lower orders for the protection which it required. Hence, it is evident, we have laboured under a considerable disadvantage. Would we had imitated you in being wiser than the Government in this matter; but the glowing eulogiums which we have heard heaped upon "gallant charges"—"splendid broadsides"—"decisive vollies"—and "nobly cutting up the enemy," have allured some of us to seek initiation in the *science* of man-killing. Many of those who have professed to proclaim the message of the "Prince of Peace," have prostituted their holy calling to an opposite purpose. Their consecration of military standards, coupled with the glory they have attached to the profession of shedding blood, has led many to imagine—like the followers of Mahomet—that he who dies on the field of battle, is certain of an inheritance in the region of bliss; and often have the relatives of those who have fallen, been deceived with this monstrous assurance; whilst their sighs have been unheard amid the clamour attending "brilliant illuminations," the "crackling of bonfires," and the echoes of "vollies," and "feu de jois."

It must be conceded, that the working classes could never have learned the superiority of moral force from the example of their governors; who have always, in their transactions with other nations, given full prominence to the opposite principle. In matters of dispute, an appeal to arms has been their favourite resort, accompanied with boastful blusterings of "national honour;" and one sad effect of their folly has been the creation of an impression on the minds of a portion of their subjects, that physical force is in harmony with reason, in proportion to the probability of success.

We have found that a modification of the same principle has been adopted by the leading parties of the state, in their contests for political power. Men of the highest pretensions to virtue, who have become candidates for parliamentary honours, have effected their objects by the most arbitrary and disgusting means. Electioneering tactics, as they are termed, have had a most injurious effect upon the masses. Thousands of them have been hired to *interrupt public meetings*, and to heap abuse on political leaders. To stop processions, bludgeons

have been placed in their hands, with intimations that they were qualified to understand their use ; and to aid them in their brutal employment intoxicating drinks have been plentifully distributed. Can it be wondered, that those who have been thus debased, should exhibit the fruits of their debasement in attempts to accomplish their own purposes by similar means !

Such proceedings, however, we desire to hold up to universal detestation. Our political rights we would scorn to obtain by the infliction of social wrongs. With faith in the vitality of truth, we confide only in those means which harmonize with its hallowed dictates.

3. Many of our opponents contend that a *feeling of revenge* exists in the minds of the working-classes, which renders it desirable, on the score of safety, to disregard their claims.

It is certain that the working-classes must have been but a slight remove from angelic beings, had not the insult and the oppression they have experienced, produced some of those inferior feelings consonant to human nature ; the former does not produce love, nor the latter respect ; it is therefore not "passing strange" that those who have been the victims of both, should look somewhat reproachfully upon the supporters of the system which has originated their grievances.

But we do unequivocally deny the existence of revengeful feelings towards those who have denounced our claims. Suffering through the medium of a vicious and corrupt system of legislation, our hostility is directed towards that system, under the conviction that its destruction will be followed by the removal of that opposition of interests, and those feelings of mistrust, which have too long perpetuated discord and division.

We will not trespass upon your attention merely to refute charges unworthy an allusion. We are now content to leave the consideration of our claims with you ; trusting that we shall soon be united in the glorious struggle to secure them.

We would that the liberty we seek were universally enjoyed. The victory of *right* over *might* we have now in view, would give an impetus to the glorious career of freedom which tyranny could never stay. In the work of political regeneration it may

be said "the field is the world!" and every modification of serfdom must be destroyed ere that work can cease.

The empty boast that England is the "envy of surrounding nations" has been vaunted long enough. Her sons' enfranchisement would convert it to a reality, though but of a short duration; for envy would speedily be followed by determination to emulate her example. The effect of that determination would be irresistible! Revolutions sought through the medium of the sword, tyranny can meet—can subdue; but with the power of MORAL FORCE it can never cope. The strain of Liberty shall yet be heard in the very recesses of despotism! and every down-trodden serf be aroused to an assertion of his right to participate in its blessings.

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